

ALTERNATIVE B

IMPACTS ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Wildlife

This alternative proposes little new campground and dock construction and demolition of more than 10 facilities throughout the park, which would temporarily disturb and permanently displace some wildlife. This alternative also proposes new facility construction at Rock Harbor and Windigo; however, habitat is marginal in those areas due to current uses. The net loss of habitat would be minimal due to the rehabilitation of sites where facilities would be demolished. Much of the new construction would be in previously disturbed areas that have had some degree of human use, but some increased use could occur and increase disturbance. The removal of facilities and the general decrease in human activity in the middle of the island would more than compensate for the increased facilities and activity toward the ends. Overall visitor use of the park would be monitored and managed, which would reduce general wildlife disturbance compared to alternative A.

A moderate amount of protection would be afforded to waterfowl and their nesting sites near the shoreline compared to the other alternatives, and a significant amount of protection would be afforded compared to alternative A.

Threatened and Endangered Species

Increased activity at the ends of the island and proposed new campgrounds would cause wolves to avoid areas that they presently use. If wolves from this area were forced into an area already used by another wolf pack, the viability of one or both packs could be threatened. For species in the middle of the island, habitats would be generally improved as the result of less human presence. Potential for disturbance to bald eagles or peregrine falcons would be reduced in

the middle of the island and could increase at the ends of the island.

Designated Wilderness

Park activities would delay for the foreseeable future the conversion of five potential wilderness areas to wilderness. There would be a delay in conversion of one additional area (in order to preserve cultural resources), and nonconforming uses would be eliminated in one area.

Geologic Processes

Removal of the Siskiwit dock and breakwater would permit natural shoreline processes to return, particularly the movement of sand and sediment along the shoreline in Siskiwit Bay.

Water Quality

Water quality impacts would be the same as the proposed action except that hydrocarbon emissions from motorboats would be reduced in the three coves zoned nonmotorized. The ecological effects of this reduction are not expected to be appreciable for the reasons outlined in the impacts of alternative A.

IMPACTS ON CULTURAL RESOURCES

Archeological Resources

In the short term, the construction necessary for the slight expansion of park housing at Windigo, expansion of water and sewer treatment capacity at Rock Harbor and Windigo, development of six new campgrounds, and construction of two new docks and removal of seven docks could have negative impacts by disturbing known or presently unknown archeological resources. In the long term, the placement of campground and docks could result in the disturbance of archeological resources by visitor use.

The establishment of nonmotorized and quiet/no-wake zones would benefit submerged and shoreline archeological resources by protecting them from wave action.

Historical Resources

Adaptive use of historic structures in four areas would help to preserve them and associated features. Decay and deterioration of historic structures in the middle of the island would cause adverse impacts on the structures and to the associated cultural landscapes.

IMPACTS ON VISITOR USE AND VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Scenic Quality

The ends of the island, particularly Rock Harbor and Windigo, would appear more developed and busier than now, negatively affecting aesthetic values. The motel units at Rock Harbor would continue to impact the natural appearance of the entrance to the harbor. A substantial decrease in development and use toward the middle of the island would increase the amount of undeveloped shoreline and the sense of naturalness of this area.

Wilderness Experience and Noise

Overall visitor use would be monitored and managed, which would generally reduce overcrowding and associated noise. This alternative attempts to spatially separate visitor uses to enhance wilderness experiences toward the middle of the island. Only alternative C would enhance wilderness experiences more. At the ends of the island, the wilderness experience would be somewhat reduced by frontcountry noise and activity that would increase compared to the other alternatives. A moderate amount of nonmotorized and quiet/no-wake water zones are proposed that would reduce some noise for land-based and paddling visitors thus enhancing their wilderness experience over alternative A.

Range of Uses

The current range of uses would continue to be accommodated. More visitors would be accommodated at the islands ends, and there would be more options for disabled visitors or elderly visitors or others seeking more structured, frontcountry experiences. Visitors would have less flexibility in moving about the middle of the island due to reduced ferry and water taxi service and fewer docks.

Visitor Use Levels

Use limits would be necessary, especially for areas in the middle of the island. Some visitors would not be able to visit specific areas on the island without adjusting their itineraries.

Safety

Emergency response toward the middle of the island could be slowed because of fewer docks one fewer ranger station. Because of fewer facilities and services, visitors in the middle of the island would have to be more self-reliant.

IMPACTS ON THE SOCIOECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

Facility construction and removal would provide short-term positive economic benefits for a relatively few individuals and businesses. The work would be completed in phases, and the benefits would be spread over the duration of the projects. Activities in the gateway communities of Houghton and Copper Harbor, Michigan, and Grand Portage, Minnesota, would continue with business enterprises responding to market conditions and demand as warranted. Despite some increased spending for development, the short- and long-term positive economic impacts of this alternative would be relatively small when compared to the affected economies as a whole.

IMPACTS ON PARK OPERATIONS

The increased development and services at Rock Harbor would increase the need for funding to subsidize the commercial operations there. This would continue to divert funds from other park programs.

While maintenance operations would be reduced in the middle of the island, requirements would increase significantly at Rock Harbor, Tobin Harbor, and Windigo. Maintenance activities would be more time consuming in nonmotorized and quiet/no-wake zones.

Reduced transportation services, fewer docks, and decreased NPS presence in the middle of the island would slow emergency response time, and overall emergency response logistics would be more difficult than they are now.

Monitoring and management of visitor use levels would increase the overall park operations workload.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

This alternative would give focus and emphasis to research and monitoring and to preservation of cultural resources at the ends of the island. The knowledge gained and the facilities protected would complement the efforts of historic preservation groups throughout the region. The decay and eventual loss of historic structures in the middle of the island, combined with those lost or removed previously, would constitute a cumulative loss of historic fabric and a negative impact on the record of the island's history.